

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks Following a Meeting With President Michael D. Higgins of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters in Dublin, Ireland**

*April 13, 2023*

*[Following his meeting with President Higgins, the President participated in a tree-planting ceremony with President Higgins and First Lady Sabina Higgins and rang the Peace Bell.]*

*President Higgins.* There they all are. I hope you're all very happy and having a good time—  
—

*President Biden.* I think—I'm afraid all of my delegation is going to want to stay and not go home. *[Laughter]* Isn't this beautiful? It's incredible.

*First Lady Higgins.* When you're in the sunshine, you're happy. That's where you want to be out.

*The President's Meeting With President Higgins*

*Q.* Mr. President, how are you feeling?

*President Biden.* I'm feeling great, and I learned a lot hanging out with the President.  
*[Laughter]*

*The President's Time in Ireland*

*Q.* Mr. President, what's it like to be home?

*President Biden.* It feels great. You know, I know it sounds silly, but there's so many Irish Americans, like my relatives, who got here and got to America in 1844, '45, and '46 who have never been back here. And they talk about it.

The interesting thing—and I know many of you have the same experience with your ancestry wherever the country of origin was. But you hear all these stories about, you know, what it was like back in Ireland, and they heard from their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents.

And the thing—on my first trip over here, when I went to the Boyne, and I looked down and I—my Grandfather Finnegan used to say—his grandfather, Owen Finnegan, in Scranton, used to say, "Scranton, Pennsylvania is just like the Boyne Valley." And I thought, "How could that be?" Well, you stand there, and you look.

In Scranton, there's a river that runs through it called the Lackawanna River and a mountain on either side and the valley. And where we lived, if you look down and see—you could see how, a hundred years earlier, it would be—it would look like the Boyne. And there's all those things.

Anyway, it's just so great to always have an excuse to come back.

*U.S. Investigation Into Leaked Classified Department of Defense Documents*

*Q.* Mr. President, could you give an update on that leak investigation, the leaked documents from DOD?

*President Biden.* I can't right now. There's a full-blown investigation going on, as you know, with the intelligence community and the Justice Department. And they're getting close. We don't—I don't have an answer for you.

*Leaked Classified Department of Defense Documents*

Q. How concerned are you about this leak?

Q. Mr. President, just to press you on that——

*President Biden.* I'm not——

Q. ——are British secrets safe in American hands, Mr. President?

Q. Yes, are you concerned about the leak?

*President Biden.* Well, I'm not concerned about the leak because—I'm concerned that it happened, but there's nothing contemporaneous that I'm aware of that is of great consequence right now.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Are you concerned about relationships with allies?

### *Belfast/Good Friday Agreement*

Q. Mr. President, I'm a reporter from Belfast. And you're ringing the Peace Bell, which was put forward in 2008 by Mary McAleese to mark the 10th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. So that's the significance of the Peace Bell. Twenty-five years on from the Good Friday Agreement, what are your hopes for the next 25 years for the people of Ireland—both jurisdictions?

*President Biden.* Gets even closer; that the—I hope that the—that the government begins to function as it used to in terms of functioning as a representative body in the north. I think that's necessary. And—but that's for you all to decide, not for me to decide.

But I think that I'm very—I'm very proud of my colleague, George Mitchell. I think he did a fine job.

*President Higgins.* Yes.

*President Biden.* As he said, "Three hundred [Seven hundred; White House correction] days of failure and one day of success." And we've got to build on that one day continually.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, can I have a selfie? [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, are British secrets safe in American hands, Mr. President?

Q. No, it's "no" to a selfie? A selfie, Mr. President, very quickly? Just over here.

Thank you. I'm Henry McKean from Newstalk Radio Ireland. Lovely to meet you. Who's going to take the selfie for me?

[*The President greeted the reporter and posed for a photograph.*]

### *The President's Irish Heritage*

Q. Mr. President, why do Irish shoemakers make great Presidents? [*Laughter*]

*The President.* Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? My great-great-grandfather left from the same port 5 weeks later after Barack's great-grand—great-great-grandfather. And the idea that they both would seek a new life and think that their great-great-grandsons would end up being President of the United States is remarkable. It's just like—but that the Irish of it.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. on the grounds of the Áras an Uachtaráin, the official residence of the President of Ireland. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. George J. Mitchell, in his former capacity as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland; and former President Barack Obama. A reporter referred to former President Mary McAleese of Ireland.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Dublin, Ireland; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Ireland, President Higgins.

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